

News Release

U of M Crookston Freshman Taylor Myers, Viking, Minn., Uses Hurt to Help and Inspire Others

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Tuesday, February 17, 2015She is stronger today because of it, but for Freshman Taylor Myers, it was the pain of loss

that resulted in her strength. Myers understands when a roommate or friend is hurting. After losing her father to esophageal cancer in 2012, she says she has become a better listener and more understanding of others. She is also much more willing to volunteer her time. "When I was in need, there were people who came to help," Myers says. "In turn, I want to help others." Her story came to light in her Composition 1011 class taught by Karen Miller, lecturer in the Liberal Arts and Education Department at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Miller uses this early assignment to write about subjects students know well, and she encourages them to write freely. "It helps them examine the factors that have shaped them and how they view the world," Miller says. "It is designed to help create community as the students share their experiences. Some of these stories are humorous while others may be sad. "These early writing assignments help students use personal stories to build writing skills and are foundational to understanding themselves and others," Miller continues.



For Myers, the process of writing about her dad's illness proved freeing and also taught her once again the value of community. As her father's health deteriorated, he was concerned about all the projects he had left unfinished. One of those projects--an unfinished barn--became a rallying point for friends of the family. That barn brought members of the community of Viking and surrounding communities, along with friends and coworkers of Dwayne Myers, together to raise that barn. His illness prevented Dwayne from being a part of the effort, but he was aware of the work going on in his yard. Unfortunately, Dwayne passed away just three days later, but this effort by his neighbors and friends had touched the lives of his daughter, Taylor, her mother, and her younger sister. For Taylor, music has been an outlet for her feelings of loss, but she discovered writing was also cathartic. Miller says storytelling helps us understand ourselves, and how our experiences shape who we are. "I use this assignment to help everyone in the classroom understand one another and how we are the same and how we are different," she explains. "Telling a story that is memorable to us, whether humorous, sad, or anything in between helps us think about perspectives and appreciate the diversity we have in our classrooms." "I am much more willing now to say yes when someone asks me to volunteer," Myers says. "I have accepted more opportunities to use my ability to sing and play piano at gatherings, including those in my church. I have volunteered in the classrooms in my hometown of Viking, and I am bolder and braver than I used to be." Next weekend, Golden Eagle Basketball will play their final home games of the season. On Friday evening February 20, all those in attendance will hear Myers sing the National Anthem. She will be singing for her dad, and she will be singing as a way to use her talents in the service of others. Her friends and family understand the reason why she sings, and everyone else will hear the sound of music that begins in the heart and spreads its beauty to all who are present. The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 31 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu. In the photos, at top, right, left to right, are Myers and her sister who both placed first in their class at the Marshall County Talent Show.

Bottom, left, Myers volunteering with a class of first graders.

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